A SERMON OF ASSVRANCE.

Foureteene yeares agoe Preached in CAMBRIDGE, since in other Places.

Now by the importunity of Friends exposed to publike view.

By THOMAS FULLER B.D. late Lecturer in *Lombard Street.*

BIBLIOTHECA BODLEIANA

LONDON,
Printed by *J. D.* for *John Williams* at the Signe of the *Crowne* in *Pauls Church-yard.* 1647.

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TO THE
HONOVRABLE,
and nobly accompliſhed Knight,
Sir IOHN DANVERS, all
the bleſſings of this, and a
better life.

SIR,

WEe read how *Zachariah* being ſtruck dumbe, called for Table-bookes thereon to write his minde, making his hands to ſupply the defect of his mouth: It hath been the pleaſure of the preſent Authority (to whoſe com- 1.

mands I humbly submit) to make me mute, forbidding mee till further order the exercise of my publicke Preaching, wherefore I am faine to imploy my fingers in writing, to make the best signes I can, thereby to expresse, as my desire to the generall good, so my particular gratitude to your Honour.

2. May this Treatise but finde the same favour from your *Eie*, as once it did from your *Eare*, and be aswell accepted when read, as formerly when heard. And let this humble Dedication be interpreted a weake acknowledgement of those strong obligations your bounty hath laid upon me. Well may you taste the fruits of that tree, whose root your liberality hath preserved from whithering,

Sir,

Sir, theſe hard times have taught mee the Art of frugality, to improve every thing to the beſt advantage; by the ſame rules of thrift, this my Dedication as returning thanks for your former favours, ſo begs the continuance of the ſame. And to end, as I began, with the example of *Zachariah*, as his dumbneſſe was but temporary; ſo I hope by Gods goodneſſe, and the favour of my friends, amongſt whom your Honour ſtands in the higheſt ranke, the miracle may be wrought, that the dumbe may ſpeake again, and as well by words publikely profeſſe, as now by his hand, he ſubſcribes himſelfe, 3.

Your Servant in all
Chriſtian office.

THOMAS FULLER.

TO THE CHRISTIAN READER.

I Shall be ſhort in my addreſſes unto thee; not onely, becauſe I know not thy diſpoſition, being a ſtranger unto thee; but chiefly, becauſe I am ignorant of my owne preſent Condition, remaining as yet, a ſtranger to my ſelfe. Were I reſtored to the free uſe of my Function, I would then requeſt, the concurrence of thy thankes with mine, to a gracious God the giver, and honourable Perſons the dealers of this great favour unto me. Were I finally interdicted my Calling, without hope of recoverie, I would beſpeake thy pitty to bemoane my eſtate. But lying as yet in the Marſhes betweene Hope and Feare, I am no fit ſubject to be condoled for, or congratulated with.

Yet it is, I truſt, no piece of Popery to maintaine, that the prayers of others may be beneficiall, and available for a perſon in my Purgatorie condition. Which moves me to crave thy Chriſtian ſuffrages, that I may be ridde out of my preſent torment, on ſuch tearmes as may moſt tend to Gods glory, mine owne good, and the edification of others. However matters ſhall ſucceede, it is no ſmall comfort to my Conſcience, that in reſpect of my Miniſteriall

riall Function, I doe not die Felo de se, not stabbing my Profession by mine own backwardnesse, who hitherto have, and hereafter shall improve my utmost endeavours, by any lawfull meanes to procure my restitution.

When the Priests would have carried the Arke after David, David forbad them to go further, If (said hee) I shall finde favour in the eyes of the Lord, hee will bring mee againe, and shew mee both it, and his habitation. But if he thus say, I have no delight in thee: behold here am I, let him doe to me, as seemeth good unto him: Some perchance would perswade me, to have the Pulpit carried after me, along with me to my private Lodgings, but hitherto I have refrained from such exercises, as subject to offence, hoping in due time to bee brought backe to the Pulpit, and endeavouring to compose my selfe to Davids resolution. And if I should bee totally forbidden my Function, then is my confidence, that, That great pasture of Gods Providence, whereon so many of my Profession doe dayly feede, is not yet made so bare by their biting, but that, besides them and Millions more, it may still comfortably maintaine,

Thy Friend and servant

in Christ Jesus.

THOMAS FULLER.

A SERMON OF ASSVRANCE.

2 PETER 1. 10.

Give rather diligence to make your calling and election sure.

MAns life may not unfitly be compared to a Candle. Curiosity may well be resembled to the *Thiefe* in the Candle, which makes men to spend much precious time in needlesse disputes, the conclusions whereof are I.

both uncertaine and unprofitable. The *Schoolemens* Bookes are stuffed with such questions, about the distances and dignities of Angels, as if men were to marshall them in *Ranke* and *File*, how that heavenly *Hoste* doe march in glory one before another. When men heare improbable matters from farre Countries related unto them, it is their usuall Returne, *It is better to beleeve them, then goe thither to confute them.* But let us not credit many unlikely-hoods concerning Angels, which the boldnesse of Schoolmen have obtruded upon us, but rather labour in Gods due time, to goe to heaven, there with our owne happy experience to confute them.

II. Well it is said of *Socrates*, that he was the first of the *Grecians*, which humbled speculative into morall Philosophy. How well would the paines of that Minister be imployed, who should endeavour to bring downe and abate many superfluous contemplative Queries into practicall *Divinity*. It were liberty enough if the *Sermons* of all Preachers were bound to keepe Residence onely on such subjects, which all Christians are bound to beleeve, and practice for their soules health; Amongst which the Doctrine in my Text, may justly challenge a principall part. When *Naomie* heard but the mention of the name of *Boaz*, the *Man*, said shee, *is neere unto us, and of our affinity*; So no sooner doe you heare this Text read unto you, *Give rather diligence to make your calling and election sure*; but every well affected heart is ready,

* *Ruth.* 2. 20.

ready to claime blood and challenge right therein. Questions about Angels are neither *kiffe nor kinne* to my soule, but this a precept of that consequence, of that concernment, we all ought to share a part and interest in the speedy and reall practice thereof.

Some difference there is betwixt us, and the *Romanists*, in reading the Text who following the vulgar Latine, adde *per bona opera, make your calling and election sure by good workes.* A clause altogether omitted in our English Translations, because in the Greeke nothing appeares answerable thereunto. Good reason therefore, that we should correct the transcript by the Originall, and purifie the streame to the clearenesse of the fountaine. God grant, that though on these just grounds we exclude good workes, out of the Text, wee may admit, embrace, and practice them in our lives and conversations. III.

My Text may not unfitly bee compared to *Ehuds* dagger, short, but sharpe. And although now it be falne into a lame hand, (the unworthynesse of the Preacher in this place) to manage it, yet inforced with the assistance of Gods arme, it may prove able to give the deadly blow, to foure *Eglon sinnes*, tyrannizing in too many mens hearts. IIII.

1. *Supine negligence in matters of Salvation.*
2. *Busie medling in other mens matters.*
3. *Preposterous curiosity in unsearchable mysteries.*

4. *Continuall wavering, or Scepticalnesse concerning our* Calling *and* Election.

1. *Supine negligence* is dispatched in that word, *Give diligence.* This grace of Assurance is unattainable by ease and idlenesse.

2. *Busie medling* in other mens matters is destroyed in the Particle *Your. Each one ought principally to intend his owne assurance.*

3. *Preposterous curiosity* is stabbed with the order of the words, *Calling and Election*, not *Election and Calling*. Men must first begin to assure their *Calling*, and then *ascendendo*, argue and inferre the assurance of their *Election.*

4. *Continuall wavering* is wounded under the fifth ribbe, in the conclusion of my Text, *Sure.* Wee will but touch at three first, and land at the last, as the chiefe subject of our ensuing Discourse.

V. This *Grace of Assurance* is not attainable with ease and idlenesse. Christianity is a laborious Profession. Observe Gods servants cleane through the Scripture, resembled to men of painefull vocations: To *Racers*, who must stretch every sinew to get first to the Goale: to *Wrestlers*, a troublesome employment; so that I am unresolved whether to recount it amongst Toiles, or Exercises, (at the best it is but a toilesome Exercise.) To *Souldiers*, who are in constant *Service* and *dayly Duty*, alwaies on the *Guard* against their Enemies. Besides, we Ministers are compared to *Shepherds*, a painefull and dangerous profession amongst the Jewes; to

Watch-

Watchmen, which continually wake for the good of others: so that besides the difficulties of our Christian calling, we are incumbred with others, which attend our Ministeriall function. Let none therefore conceit, that Salvation with the Graces accompaning it (whereof this *Assurance* we treat of is a Principall) is to be compassed with facility, without constant care and endeavour to obtaine it. How easily was the man in the Gospell let downe to our Saviour in the house, whilst foure men for him uncovering the roofe thereof, let him downe with cords lying quietly on his couch? Some may suppose that with as little hardship they may bee lifted up to heaven, and that whilest they lazily lye snorting on their beds of security, (never mortifying their lusts, never striving for grace, never struggling against their corruptions) they shall bee drawne up to happinesse, or it let down to them, merely by the cords of Gods mercy, and Christs merits. Such men without amendment will one day finde themselves dangerously deceived, and that it is a laborious taske, to gaine either the fureneſſe, or assurance of salvation, wherein, according to the Apostles prescription, *we must give diligence.*

To make your [Each Christian is principally VII.
to endeavour the Assurance of his owne Calling and Election.] Indeed it were to be wished, that Parents, besides themselves, were assured of the true sanctity (so by consequence of their Calling and Election) of themselves multiplied,

ed the children God hath given them, of the second part of their selves lying in their bosome, their wives, of true grace in their friends and family. How comfortable were it, if Ministers were ascertained of true grace and pietie in the breasts and bosomes of the people committed to their charge. But the best way to passe a rationall verdict, on the sincerity of sanctity in another, is first to finde an experimentall Evidence thereof in ones own heart. A Philosopher complained, that it was an exceeding hard thing to finde a wise man, true, said another, *for he must bee a wise man that seekes him, and knowes when he hath found him*; and hence ariseth the difficulty, because two wise men in effect must meet together, the *Seeker*, and the *Finder*. It is a hard thing in like manner to bee assured of unfained faith, and undissembled Devotion in another mans heart. Because first, that party must have a feeling of the operation of grace in his owne soule (otherwise blinde men are incompetent Judges of colours) before he can make his presumptions of holinesse in another, from those sacred symptomes and fruits of piety, which he findes in his owne Conscience. Let it therefore be every mans maine worke, first to make a scrutiny in his owne soule, to make his own *Calling* and *Election* sure.

VII. How contrary is this to the common practice of most in the world? It is a tale of the wandring Iew, but it is too much truth of too

many wandring Christians: whose home is alwaies to bee abroad, Professours in spirituall Palmestry, who will undertake to read the *Life-line*, the line of eternall life in the hands of mens soules, though for all their skill, they often mistake the hands of *Esau* for the hands of *Jacob*, approving many hypocrites for their holinesse and condemning sincere soules for counterfeits and dissemblers.

Calling and *Election* [men are not to lanch into the Depths of Predestination at the first dash, but first soberly to begin with their *Calling* or *Vocation*.] Surely the very Angells which climbed up the ladder in *Jacobs* * dreame did first begin at the last and lowest Round. First looke to finde thy justification, and sanctification, then thy adoption and vocation, lastly thy election and predestination. But alasse, as the *Hebrews* read their letters backward: so it is to be feared that too many preposterously invert the order of my Text, and instead of Calling and Election, read Election and Calling, first grasping at those mysteries (both in their practise and discourse) which are above their reach, as if their soules feared to be runne a-ground, if sailing in the shallows of Faith and good workes, they never count themselves safe, but when adventuring in those secrets wherein they can finde no bottome. VIII. * Gen. 28. 11.

We are now come to the youngest part in the Text, to which we intend a *Benjamin's* portion. Being to discourse of the certainty IX.

of

of *calling* and *election*, not in respect of God's predestination, it being from all Eternity sure in him, * *from the beginning of the world God knoweth all his workes*, but in reference to man's apprehension, concerning the assurance thereof. And now least our discourse like * *Jordan* in the first *moneth* should over-flow, wee will raise these Bankes to bridle it, and consider;

* Act. 15. 8.

* 1 Chro. 12. 15.

1. That assurance of *Calling* and *Election* is feasible in this life to be attain'd.
2. What this assurance is.
3. How a Christian buckleth and applieth it to his soule?
4. Wee will satisfie some doubts and difficulties in this behalfe.
5. Wee will conclude with comfortable uses to all sotts of Christians.

X. Of the first. That assurance of ones *Calling* and *Election* may, without any miraculous revelation, be in this life acquired, appeareth plaine in the Text, because the *Apostle* in the simplicity of the *Dove*-like Spirit exhort's us to the attaining thereof. Now surely it had been no better than *holy fraud*, (which heaven hath a *Pillorie* to punish) to put men upon a *labour in vaine*, to seeke that which is not to be found. Thinke not therefore that the assurance of *Calling* and *Election* is like the Philosophers *stone*, which so many have searched for, yet all have lost their estates, before they could find it out; but no doubt by God's blessing

blessing it is in this world attainable. And yet the *Papists* maintaine, that whilest wee live in this world, and saile in our desires and affections to the rich *Indies* of Heaven and happinesse, no further Land is discoverable beyond the *Cape of good hope*, and that it is arrogancy and presumption (without an immediate expresse by revelation from Heaven) for any to conceive himselfe assured of his salvation.

For the second, this assurance of ones *Calling* and *Election* is a [separable] fruit or effect, not of every true, but only of some strong Faiths, whereby the party is perswaded, of the certainty of his Calling and Election. I say separable, to manifest my dissenting from such worthy Divines, who make this Assurance to bee the very Being, Essence, Life, Soule, and Formality of Faith itself. Whence these two Opinions as false, as dangerous, must of necessity bee inferred. First, that every one who hath true faith, and are eternally to bee saved, have alwaies some measure of this Assurance: Secondly, that such, who are devoid of this Assurance, are likewise deprived of all sincere faith for the present. But God forbid any Preacher should deliver Doctrines so destructive to Christian comfort on the one side, and advantagious to Spirituall Pride on the other. Such will prove *Carnificina*, the racks and tortures of tender Consciences. And as the * careless Mother kill'd her little childe, for she overlaid it; so the weight of this heavie Doctrin, would presse many poore, but pious soules; ma- XI.

* 1 King. 3.

ny faint, but feeble infant-faiths to the pit of Despaire, exacting and extorting from them more than God requires, that every Faith should have assurance with it, or else be uneffectuall to salvation. No, the formality of Faith, consists in mans renouncing and disclaiming all sufficiencie in himselfe, casting, rolling, and relying his soule totally and entirely on the mercies of God, and merits of Christ, though not assured sometimes of the certainty of his salvation. Like a man in a tempest cast out of the ship, and lying on a planke or board, placeth all his humane hopes on that planke or board, thereby to escape drowning, though he have no certainty, that the same shall bring him safe to the shore.

XII. As for those reverend Divines who have written and maintained the contrary, that Assurance is the very soule of faith, and faith dead and useless without it; far be it from me, because dissenting from their opinions, to raile on their Persons, and wound the memories of those which are dead with opprobrious termes; rather let us thank God for their learned and religious writings left behinde them, knowing, that the head of the knowledge of this Age, stands on the shoulders of the former, and their very errors have advantaged us into a clearer discovery of the truth in this particular.

In the next place, a Christian thus collecteth this *Assurance* of his *Calling and Election*, by composing this practicall *Syllogisme* in his soule.

The

The Major.

He that truely repenteth himselfe of his sinnes, and relyeth with a true faith on God in Christ, is surely Called, and by consequence Elected before all Eternity to be a vessell of honour.

The Minor.

But I truely repent my selfe of my sinnes, and rely with a true faith on God in Christ.

The Conclusion.

Therefore I am truly Called and Elected, &c.

The *Major* is the *sense of the Scripture* in severall places, the very effect of Gods promises, and the generall scope of the Gospell: so that if Satan should be so impudent, as to deny the truth of this Proposition, he may be beaten with that weapon, whereat once he challenged our Saviour, *it is written.*

All the difficulty is in the *Minor*. Happy that man, blessed that woman, who without self-delusion, without flattering their owne soules, can seriously make this Assumption, *But I, &c.* For such I dare be bold to make the Conclusion, yea it makes it selfe for them, without my Assistance. But alasse! many out of fearefulnesse dare not make this *Minor*, concerning this Assumption to bee presumption in them. And although, they might truely doe it (being in a better condition then they conceive themselves) yet overwhelmed with the sense of their sinnes and Gods severity, they assume the contrary, and poore soules, often XIII.

apprehend and conclude their owne damnation in their wounded consciences: whereas others with a more dangerous mistake of common illuminations, for discriminating grace, falsely make the *Minor*, and causelesly inferre, their blessed condition, without just ground for the same. Such few as goe rightly to worke doe produce these three witnesses, to assert the truth of this *Minor* proposition.

XIV. First, the testimony of their Conscience, that Atturney Generall to the King of heaven, whose Yea or Nay, ought to bee more with us then all the Oathes in the world beside. One knoweth whom it is that he loveth, and whom he loveth not, whom it is he trusteth, and whom he trusteth not, and in like manner his Conscience tells him, whether he doth, or doth not truely repent, whether seemingly, or sincerely he casteth himselfe on God in Christ.

XV. Secondly, the witnesse of the holy Spirit in their hearts,* *which beareth witnesse with their Spirit, that they are the children of God.* Now wee must with sorrow confesse, that this doctrine of the Spirit dwelling in the heart of Gods servants is much discountenanced of late, and the Devill thereupon hath improved his owne interest. To speake plainely, it is not the fiercenesse of the Lion, nor the fraud of the Fox, but the mimicalnesse of the Ape, which in our Age hath discredited the undoubted Truth. But what if the Apes in *India* finding a glow-worme, mistooke it to be true fire, and heaping much combustible matter

* Rom. 8. 16.

ter

ter about it, hoped by their blowing of it, thence to kindle a flame; I say, what if that Animal Γελωτόπειον, that *Mirth-making creature*, deceived it selfe, doth it thence follow that there is no true fire at all? And what if some Phanaticall Anabaptists, by usurpation have intitled their brainesicke fancies, to be so many illuminations of the spirit, must we presently turne * *Sadduces* in this point, and deny that there is any spirit at all? God forbid. We confesse the Apostles in the Primitive Church were our elder bretheren, and with *Isaac* carried away the inheritance of the spirit in so great a proportion, as to be enabled thereby to miraculous operations; Yet so, that wee, (though the yonger bretheren) the sonnes of *Keturah*, have rich and precious gifts of the spirit bestowed upon us, which at sometime or other, in a higher or lower degree sweetly move the soule of all Gods servants, and in many of them, testifie the truth of that *Minor Proposition*, namely the sincerity of their faith and repentance.

* Acts 23.8.

XVI. The third and last witnesse we will insist on, is that comfort and contentment, the Conscience of the party takes in doing good works, and bringing forth the fruits of new obedience. That though hee knowes his best good works are stained with corruptions and many imperfections, yet because they are the end of his vocation, and the Justifiers of his Faith; because thereby the Gospell is graced, wicked men amazed, some of them converted, the rest confounded, weake Christians confirmed, the poore relieved, Devils repi-

repining at them, Angels rejoycing for them, God himselfe glorified by them, I say, because of these and other reasons, he doth good deeds with humility and cheerefulnesse, and findeth a singular joy in his soule resulting from the doing thereof. This joy is an excellent witnesse to depose the truth of his Faith and repentance, and to confirme the *Minor* in the former Syllogisme.

XVII. See here though good works on just ground were excluded our Text, yet in due time and their proper places wee have entertained them in our sermon. If good workes offer to crowd into our justification, let us be so bold as to shut the doore against them. But if wee have any to come into our sanctification, thereby also to averre and attest the truth of our Faith and Repentance, let us say to them as *Laban* to *Jacob*, *why stand yee without, come in yee blessed of the Lord.* And this joy conceived from the good workes men doe, is the more pure the more private, the more sincere, the more secretly it is carried. I shall ever commend the modesty of *Elisabeth*, who after long barrennesse finding her self with child did not publish her happinesse to the veiw of the world, but hid her self three moneths. If after too long sterility in goodnesse, thou perceivest thy self at last by God's grace pregnant in pious workes, vent not thy good successe in the Market-place, doe not boast and bragge thereof in discourse to others, but bee contented to enjoy the solid comfort thereof betwixt God and thy owne conscience.

So

XVIII. Soe much for the three witnesses to confirme the truth of the *Minor*. All that I shall adde is this, let us who are or should bee schollars take heed, whom our parents or friends have bred at the Fountaines of Learning and Religion, till our portions are almost shrunke into our Education. Let us take heed, least silly simple people, who never read *Aristotle's Organon*, never knew how to mould Argument in mood and figure, make this Syllogisme true in their hearts, by their *supernaturall Logicke*, whilest we, with all our wit and unsanctified learning, make at the best but a Solœcisme, and thereby put a dangerous fallacy upon our owne soules.

XIX. But heere wee must propound and answer some objections, the resolution whereof may tend both to our instruction and comfort. *Object.* The first is this, whether all the servants of God now living, and in the state of grace, arefor the present assured of their *Calling* and *Election*, So that if instantly arrested to pay their *debt* to nature, they are as confident of their souls mounting up to heaven and happinesse, as of their bodies falling downe to dust and corruption.

XX. Wee divide the congregation of God's servants now surviving into rankes, First * *Mansons* old disciples, seniour professors of piety. * *Hannah's* which have lived many yeares in the Temple, *serving God with Fasting and Prayers night and day*. These by frequent acts, have contracted a habit of Piety, Grace by custome is made another nature unto them, especially towards. *Answ.* * Acts. * Luke 2. 37.

towards the latter end of their liues; partly becauſe their ſoules do ſteale a Glymps, Glance, or *Piſgah*-ſight of heaven, through the Cleſts and Chinkes of their Age, or ſickneſſe-broken-bodies; and partly becauſe, as all motion is ſwifteſt the neereſt it comes to the Center: So they, the neerer they draw by death to heaven, God's Spirit and all goodneſſe groweth more quick and active in them. Of theſe wee ſay that it is often obſerved, God deales ſo graciouſly with them, as to crowne their endeavors with an aſſurance of ſalvation. To ſuch I may adde thoſe whom I may call *young-old-Chriſtians*, whoſe profeſſion of Chriſt, though ſhort, hath beene thick; though young in yeares, yet they have not onely done, but ſuffered for Chriſt. Religion hath coſt them deare, they have not only been ſummered but wintered in piety, have not onely paſſed proſperity, but have been acquainted with adverſity therein. Great travelors in Chriſtianity, which have *out the line*, and have paſſed the Torrid Zone of Perſecution, and which is more, of a *wounded conſcience*. Theſe alſo God may admit into the former forme, and out of his undeſerved mercy reward them with the Aſſurance of their ſalvation.

XXI. But all ſtarres which ſhine in heaven are not of the firſt greatneſſe, neither are all of *David's* worthies to bee equalled with the firſt three. Other Chriſtians there are (who in God's due time may mate the former both in grace and glory) Puſnies in piety, Novices in Religion:

on: Of such, I say, not one of a hundred (whatsoever they may erroneously pretend to the contrary) are assured of their *Calling* and *Election*.

If further it be demanded, whether every Saint of God belonging to Election, hath not at one time or other in his life or at his death, this assurance conveyed into his soule, I must confesse that herein, the streames of learned mens judgements, runne not onely in different, but contrary channells. Some are of opinion that God is so gracious, and magnifies his mercy so much in his proceedings towards his servants, that the very meanest in the *Family of Faith*, have some proportion of this assurance, conferred upon them during their abode in this life. Other Divines, no whit inferiour to the former in number, Learning, Religion, and Christian experience, maintaine the opposite opinion: that God sometimes is so pleased, to try the patience, and humble the hearts of some of his servants, that a continuall feare, is a constant *covering of their eyes, they go heavily all the day long*, never daring for feare of presumption, to owne and acknowledge any grace in their hearts, alwai s jealous of their owne condition, and sadly suspitious of themselves, least all their holinesse prove hypocrisie, and their Piety be more in profession then sincerity. Those may be compared unto children in their Mothers belly, which have true life in them, and yet themselves doe not know that they live. For my owne part, I conceive this controversie XXII.

can onely bee decided betwixt God, and a mans owne Conscience: no third Person can be privie to the secret transactions betwixt them. The last of these two Opinions (so farre as one may conXXX jecture) hath most of charity, and not the least of truth in it. I am perswaded that many a pious soule dying in the fit of a temptation, hath instantly expected to sinke from his death-bed into hell-fire, when the same by Gods goodnesse hath beene countermanded a contrary way, and sent to blisse and happinesse; Yea, it is more then probable, that many sad and afflicted spirits, have beene possessed of glory in heaven, before they durst ever owne that themselves had any true *Grace* on earth.

XXIII. The next question which comes to be resolved, is, whether this assurance once possessed, may not afterwards be forfeited. Here the controversie is not, whether once the childe of God, may relapse into the state of damnation, totally and finally losing all saving *Grace* in his heart, (which desperate Position cuts asunder the sinewes of all Gospel-comfort) but it is onely enquired into, whether the apprehension or *Assurance of his calling*, may not in some cases be lost. Wherein our answer is affirmative, and this usually comes to passe on these two sad Occasions.

XXIV. First, when the Party commits some Conscience-wasting sinne, such as *Tertullian* tearmes, *Peccatum devoratorium salutis*, and continues in the same some season without repentance, indeed every surreptitious sinne, or sinne of infirmity, and especially a complication of many of them toge-

ther,

ther, have a good minde to destroy this *Assurance*; But it is seldome seene, that their strength is so great, (though they frequently fret and dayly nibble at the cordes of our Assurance) as to share or grind them asunder, a thing usually done by the committing of high and heinous offences. There is a whirlewinde in the *West-Indies*, called a *Herricane*, which comes but seldome, and yet too often. For then Rasor-like it shaves downe all levell and flat before it, Trees, and Townes, and Towres, in a word, it is as wild and savage as the Natives of the Countrey. No lesse the impetuous violence and cruelty of a Conscience-wasting-sinne: such as *Lots* Incest, *Davids* Adultery, *Peters* denial, when they come, they make a depopulation of all *Graces* formerly planted in the soule, maiming the hand of Faith, breaking the Anchor of Hope, quenching the heate of Charity, darkning the light of knowledge, and totally taking away for a time, the comfortable apprehension of Gods love to them, and their calling to God. This made *David* petition to God, *Restore to me the joy of thy salvation*. Wherein three things are implied. First, that once he did possesse that joy, *Restore it*. Secondly, that now hee had lost it, *Restore it*; Lastly, that the losse thereof was not so desperate, but with hope by true sorrow, to recover this joy. *Restore to me the joy of thy Salvation*. IVXX

The second way to lose this Assurance, is by suffering some great affliction, above the standard and proportion of ordinary crosses, seemingly XXV.

of a sadder hue, and blacker complexion then what usually befall other Christians. In such a case a sorrowfull soule, is ready thus to reason with it selfe. Once I conceived my selfe in a happy condition, thinking my selfe estated in the favour of God, truely called, and by consequence truely elected to grace here, and glory hereafter. But now alasse, I perceive my selfe utterly mistaken. I built my hopes on a false bottome, I am but a meere formalist, a pretender to piety, yea a reprobate and cast-away, otherwise God would never afflict me in this fashion, with such hideous and horrible crosses, dolefull tribulations, dismall temptations, so that the brimstone of hell-fire may plainely bee sented therein. Thus holy *Job*, when God discharged whole volleys of Chaine-shot of afflictions against him, *one drew on another*, we find him sometimes venting expression, rankly favouring of despaire, and no wonder if hee began to stagger who had drunke so deepely of the bitter cuppes. And now conceiving our selves in some measure to have satisfied the most important practicall queries wherewith this doctrine of Assurance is incumbred, we come to make some profitable application.

XXVI. The *Grecians* had a threefold Song, the *Old men* sung, *we have beene*, the *middle aged* men *we are*, the *young* men, *we shall be*. This Song will serve to divide my Auditors at this time. Some sing *we have beene*. There was a happy time wherein wee were ascertained of our *Calling* and *Election*,

Election, but now, alasse poore soules! I have lost it. Others Sing *wee are* for the present in the peacible possession of such assurance. Others sing *wee shall bee* in God's due time, when his goodnesse and wisedome seeth fit, such an happinesse shall bee bestowed upon us.

Wee begin with the first that sing, *wee have* XXVII. *beene*, O that it were in my power as well to help as to pitty you, to amend as to bemoane your condition! It is the greatest misery, that one hath once beene happy. All your Song is a *Burthen*. The best advice I can prescribe unto you is this, seriously consider with your selves which way you lost this assurance of your *Salvation* was it by committing a conscience-wasting-sinne? no Divine can commend unto you better or other Physick, than onely * *Remember from whence* * Revel. 2. 5. *thou art fallen, and repent and doe thy first Workes.* And although it may please God in his mercy to forgive thy dayly imperfections and manifold infirmities, on thy generall repentance and quotidian prayer, *and forgive us our trespasses*, yet the most comfortable course and surest way to obtaine peace of conscience after the committing of an hainous offence, is by particular humiliation for it, without which serious sorrow, solide comfort is either never given, or not long enjoyed.

But if thou hast forfeited thy former assurance, XXVIII. thorough the pressure of some heavy affliction, learne and labour to rectifie thy erroneous judgement, who from the premises haply of God's

love, at the worst of his anger, hath falsely inferred a conclusion of his hatred against thee. Consider how God corrects those whom hee loves most, to the intent that all grace may bee encreased and improved in them. Passing by on a night in the streets, I met a youth having a lighted linke in his hands, who was offended thereat, because it burnt so dark and dimme, and therefore the better to improve the light thereof, he beat, bruised, and battered it against the wall, that the wicke therein might be spread out, and the pitch with other combustible matter, (which before stifled the light with its overstiffnesse) might be loosened, which presently caused the linke to blaze forth into a lighter flame. God in like manner deales with thy soul; that thou mayest shine the brighter before men, hee doth buffet and afflict thee with severall temptations, which give thee occasions to exercise thy graces which lay hid in prosperity. Such corrections will in conclusion, greatly adde to thy spirituall light and lustre. Apply these and the like consolations to thy soule, and remember what *David* saith, *heavinesse may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning*. Yea but you will say, my night of sorrow, is like the nights in *Greene-Land*, which last full four moneths together. A long night I must confesse, but day will dawne at the last, and last the longer for it.

XXIX. Come we now to those that sing *wee are*, who doe not boast (that is a bad signe) but rejoyce,

joyce, that for the present they are possessed of this assurance. And is it so indeed? And doest thou not deceive thy selfe, beholding thy condition through a flattering glasse or false spectacles? Well if thou affirmest it, I dare not deny it. It were no manners nor charity in mee to give thy beliefe the lie, and therefore what you say of your selves, I give credite thereunto. Onely let me stay a little and congratulate your happy estate. *Good successe have you with your honour.* God hath not dealt thus with every one, neither have all his servants so large a proportion of his favour. And now I will take the boldnesse to commend some counsell unto you. In the first place be thankefull to God for this great courtesie conferred upon thee, and know, that all heavenly gifts as they are got by Prayer, are kept, confirmed, and increased by Praises.

Secondly, take heed of insulting over such as want this assurance: upbraid not them with their sad condition. Say not unto them, I am certaine of my *Calling and Election*, *Ergo*, I am a Saint, a chosen vessell, eternally to bee saved; Thou lackest this certainty, therefore art a reprobate, a cast away, a fire-brand of Hell, eternally to bee damned. Is this the expression of thy gratitude to God, proudly to trample on his servants, and thy brethren? It is hard to say, whether that thy inference hath more of profanenesse, or falsehood in it. If a Favourite to a great Emperour should say, [*All that are not in as high esteeme and credit*

XXX.

credit with the Emperour as my selfe, are so many Traitours.] Would not this be accounted not only, a vaine-glorious expression, but injurious, both to his soveraigne and fellow-subjects? How many thousands of them, would be willing, yea desirous to adventure their lives, in a lawfull cause for their Emperours honour, who notwithstanding never had the favour, to bee personably known unto him, much lesse to be preferred by him to places of eminent trust and command. And may not many be presumed on, as cordially affected to Gods glory, which from their hearts love and honour both him and his, compleatly loyall to his heavenly Majesty, who have not as yet been advanced so high, and ingratiated so farre with him, as to receive the *Assurance* of their *Calling and Election?*

XXXI. Thirdly, walke humbly before God, and know that this Assurance hath a narrow throate, and may be choaked with a small sinne, if God leave thee to thy selfe. There be two kindes of poyson, the one hot, the other cold. Hot poyson makes speedy dispatch, it sends men post to their graves; Cold poyson is not so active and operative, it kills but at distance, and if in any reasonable time it meets with a seasonable Antidote, the malignity thereof may be prevented, yea perchance without an Antidote, if falling upon a strong and sturdy constitution, may be mastered by natures own Cordiall, not finally to destroy, but onely to stupifie and benumme. Presumption is hot poyson, it kills its thousands, makes quick riddance of mens soules

soules to damnation. Despaire, wee confesse, is poyson, and hath kill'd its thousands, but the venome there of is more curable, as more colde and faint in the operation thereof. Take heede therefore of presumption, lest the confidence of the *Assurance of thy Calling* betray thee to spirituall Pride, that to Security, that to Destruction.

XXXII. Here take notice that the soule of a Saint consists of sacred riddles, and holy contradictions: *Rejoyce (saith* * *David) before him with trembling*: if rejoying how can hee tremble, if trembling how can hee rejoyce? Oh that it an unhappy soule which cannot find an expedient betwixt these extremities! that cannot accommodate these seeming contrarieties! *Rejoycing*, when he lookes on a gracious God, *trembling*, when he beholds a sinfull selfe: *Rejoycing*, when looking upward on Gods promises, *trembling*, when looking downwards on his deserts. Ever *triumphing*, that hee shall be saved, and ever trembling lest he should bedamned; ever certaine that he shall stand, and ever careful least he should fall. *Tanta est gratia certitudinis, (saith Saint Augustine) quanta est gratia sollicitudinis.* He that hath much feare to offend God, hath much certainty to continue in his favour: he that feares little, hath little certainty; and he that is altogether fearelesse, whatsoever he proudly presumes to the contrary, hath no assurance at all to persevere in Gods favour. Wee may observe that such as have the shaking Palsie on their heads, live to be very aged men: sure I am, that such as have a fitfull feare to incurre their hea-

* Psal. 2. 11.

venly Fathers displeasure, hold out to the last, even to that life which hath no end. The heavens themselves are said to have *Metum trepidationis*, and the best and most spirituall servants of God, constantly feele such trembling fits in their owne souls. In a word, Assurance to persevere is a sparkle of heavenly fire, fed with the dayly tinder of feare to offend God.

XXXIII. Nor let any confidently presume on the mysterie of predestination, (which like the Lawes of the *Medes* and *Persians* cannot be repealed) thereon to sinne with indempnity, because once and ever Gods servant, and no feare finally to fall from him. For, besides other answers to quell their pride, let such seriously consider but this particular instance. God granted *Hezekiah* a Lease of his life for fifteen yeares longer, and it was impossible for him to dye till that terme was expired, so that had *Hezekiah* fed on Toades and Vipers, on the most noxious food for mans nature, he was notwithstanding immortall during the time prefixt, because Truth it selfe had promised it. However if *Hezekiah* proved careleſſe in his diet, though certaine of his life, he had no assurance of his health for that season. His intemperance might draw sickneſſe on him, so that hee might lose the life of his life, his liberty of walking abroad, comfort in conversing with company, pleasure in tasting his meate and drinke, to be kept constant prisoner on his bed, a languishing as bad as death it selfe. Grant in like manner, that Predestination priviledgeth thee from finall Apostacie, yet if careleſſe

careleſſe to keepe Gods Commandements, thou
muſt forfeit all thy ſpirituall comfort, the *joy of*
thy Salvation, have a hell on earth in thy Conſci-
ence, having in thy apprehenſion all the beames of
Gods favour eclipſed, one glimpſe thereof a ſer-
vant of God prizeth above millions of worlds.

We come now to theſe that ſing, *we ſhall be*. It XXXIV.
is (ſay they) not onely vaine but wicked to ſeeke
to better our conditions by telling a lie. Wee
ſhould wrong God and our owne conſciences to
affirme that for the preſent this Aſſurance is con-
ferred upon us, but are not in deſpaire in due time
from God's mercy to receive it. Some counſels I
have to recommend unto them.

Firſt doe not envie and repine at their happines, XXXV.
to whom this favour is already confirmed, but be-
cauſe God hath lov'd and honour'd them ſo much,
doe thou love and honour them the more, and doe
deſire and endeavour to bee added to their ſociety.

Secondly know to thy comfort that were it not XXXVI.
more for God's glory, and thy good, this Aſſu-
rance had long ſince been beſtowed upon thee.
And for ſeverall reaſons it is hitherto detained.

1. Perchance becauſe as yet thou haſt not fer-
vently ſued to God for it. Thy affections are
gold weighes, not zealouſly engaged in the
deſire thereof. Thou ſeemeſt indifferent and
unconcern'd, whether thou receiveſt this Aſ-
ſurance or no. Now God ſets ſuch an eſtimate
and valuation on this Aſſurance, as a grand
gift, and favour of the firſt magnitude, that
he will have it ſought, and ſearched, and ſued,

and prayed, and pressed for, with holy constancy, and restlesse importunity before hee will grant it. *Hannah* called her sonne, * *Samuel, For* (said shee) *I have asked him of the Lord.* Every good thing, temporall, spirituall, inward, outward, every particular grace must be a *Samuel*, craved, and requested of God before the fruition thereof can be sweet to our soules, or comfortable to our Consciences. To have a favour, before we have requested it, is the ready way to lose it, before wee know the true worth and value thereof.

* 1. Sam. 1. 20.

2. Perchance God as yet with-holds this assurance from thee, with intent to render it more acceptable when it is bestowed. Never had *Isaac* beene so welcome to *Sarah*, but because long barrennesse, and expectation, had set so sharpe an edge on her affection.

3. It may be God in his Providence foresees, should this Assurance be bestowed upon thee, thou would'st play the unthrift and ill husband therewith: And therefore God still keeps it in his own hand, untill thou beest more wise and better able to manage and imploy it. The * Prodigall Sonne having received his Portion from his Father, riotously spent it amongst Harlots; the same may be suspected by thee, and therefore as carefull Parents, jealous of their sonnes thriftinesse, will not deliver unto them all their Meanes at once, but rather confine them for some yeares to a small Pension and moderate Annuitie, intending to

* Luke 15.

open

open their hands, and enlarge their bounty, when they see cause; God in like manner will not intrust thee with the grosse summe of thy Assurance to be paid thee all at once, but retaile it out unto thee, by degrees more or less; now a scruple, now a dramme thereof. And when thou shalt give good Evidence of thy Christian prudence to husband and improve it, the remnant of this Assurance shall wholly be made over unto thee.

Thirdly, wait and attend the time of God. *O* XXXVII
tarry the Lords leasure (when he will be, he can bee at leasure) who in the most fittest minute and moment will confirme this long expected Assurance unto thee. Know this that all the weights and and plummets of humane importunity, cannot make the Clock of Gods Time strike a minute sooner then he hath set it. No doubt the Virgin *Mary* shared the greatest Interest in our Saviour according to the flesh, to obtaine a reasonable request of him, and yet could not prevaile for the working of a Miracle before his * *houre was fully come.* Wherefore be thou not like to *Hophni* and *Phineas* the Priests, who contrary to Gods institution, when any man offered a sacrifice, used to send a servant whilest the flesh was seething, with a * *Flesh-hooke* of three teech in his hand, who thrusting it into the kettle, tooke for his Masters part, *whatsoever the Flesh-hook chrought up*; And if any advised him to stay till the fat was burnt, according to the custome under the law, he presently proved impatient, would have no sodden

* John 2.4.

* 1 Sam.2. 13

sodden flesh but raw, which if not instantly given him, *he would take it by force.* Now such are the ravenous appetites, and voracious stomacks of many men, that when they propound any thing to their desires, they will not stay till God hath fitted it for them; but by *hooke or by crooke*, by any sinister or indirect meanes they will compasse their ends. Such will *feed on raw meat* (as if the heat of their ardent desires would roast it enough for themselves) morsels which perchance sometimes would be pleasant for the Palate to taste, but never wholesome for the stomacke to digest. These are not pleased, though having what they please, if not also when they please: But not thou of their Diet, know such raw meat will occasion crudities in thy stomacke. Quietly attend till God hath cooked thy meat for thee: thinke not in vaine to antidate, his time is the best time. Know that generally the *Watches* of our *desires* goe too fast, and therefore to set them right, they must be set backe according to the *Sunne-dyall* of *Gods pleasure.* Wherefore without any murmuring or repining, doe thou willingly and cheerefully waite the happy time, when God shall bee pleased to bestow this Assurance upon thee.

XXXVIII. To Conclude with the time; The Schoolemen have a distinction of a two-fold certainety of Salvation; the one *evidentiæ*, the other *adhærentiæ*: the former is when one evidently and clearely apprehends Gods favour seal'd unto him by his Spirit. This hitherto thou lackest, but doest

doſt diligently labour, dayly pray, and duely waite to receive it. The latter of adherence or recumbencie, all true Chriſtians ought ever to bee poſſeſſed off, which hope for any happyneſſe. Namely when a man caſteth himſelfe wholly upon Chriſt, clinging about him with *Jobs* reſolution, *Though thou killeſt mee, yet will I put my truſt in thee.* Till we gaine the latter, let us make much of the former, having as much ſafety, though not ſo much ſolace in it; and which will with as much certainety, though not ſo much comfort, through Gods mercy, bring our ſoules to heaven and happineſſe: *Amen.*

FINIS.